

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Introduction to Biblical Studies, Session 1, Introduction to Historical Geography

© 2024 Elaine Phillips and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Elaine Phillips in her teaching on Introduction to Biblical Studies. This is session 1, Introduction to Historical Geography.

We're getting started on our unit on Bible geography today and we have about 12 lectures that are going to be forthcoming.

The first one is going to be Introduction, as you can see. So for getting started, we'll come to that picture on the right in a moment, that will show up later on. But first we have an introductory question for ourselves and it runs kind of like this.

It might surprise you a little bit. Joshua 15, I'm not sure how many of you have read Joshua 15 lately, but it's 64 verses devoted to the following, and I'm only going to read a tiny portion of it to give you a sense in terms of why this might be a bit of a challenge question.

So here we go. Joshua 15 is The allotment for the tribe of Judah, clan by clan, extended down to the territory of Edom.

Their southern boundary starts from the bay and then goes on to describe the entire southern boundary. The eastern boundary described happens to be the Salt Sea. The northern boundary, at length, the northern boundary is described.

The western boundary is the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea. And then it goes on for all the rest of that chapter, which, as I said, is rather lengthy, to describe and list all the cities that happen to be in the tribe of Judah. And you might want to ask yourselves, why all this detail? Why do geographers love it? Well, they love it because of all the place names, but Bible students can love it too.

And let me suggest at least two reasons why, and that will be our introductory question and somewhat of an answer to our whole unit on historical geography. Just remember that as the Israelites were coming into this promised land, that's exactly what it was: the promised land. And God had made a promise to Abraham.

That's a long time before this, but here we see God's perfect timing, his promise, and his covenant promise being fulfilled. They're coming into the land, and it's not just a vague sort of thing. These are places.

The tribe of Judah has boundaries. It's got cities that are important. The promise, as I said, is being fulfilled.

Joshua 15 is a very excellent demonstration of God's faithfulness to his people. In addition, there's one more thing going on. This is the tribe of Judah.

That's going to be important for all kinds of reasons as we think about, Judah's position and the line of Judah going through millennia. So kind of keep that in mind as we get ourselves going.

Geography is marvelous. Now, need to start with some definitions, first of all. So, definitions are going to be helped a little bit just by looking at a map, which we have here.

You can see it. It's got the Mediterranean Sea and the Arabian Desert. It's got some red lines all over it.

And that's going to shape what's going on for us as we're thinking about our discipline of historical geography. Geography, first of all, is simply, and these are very simple definitions, by the way, it's the study of the land. As one of my teachers of geography used to say, it's the playing board on which all these things take place.

It's our spatial dimension, and we'll say a lot more about how that all works in a moment. History, if we're talking about these two disciplines that come together in historical geography, again, a very simple definition, but one that will help us for now. It's the succession of events.

In other words, this is our temporal dimension that's going on. So it's a spatial dimension, a temporal dimension. And those things that you see happening on that map are actually reflecting some of what will happen in terms of how people live, how they travel, et cetera, et cetera.

We'll do a lot more with that in a moment. There might be some questions in terms of why spend a whole unit on geography. Why break this land down so much? Well, here we go, for starters. Geography shapes where and how we all live.

So you can read this as well as I can. Geography is made up of the study of water. We need water to live.

It's made up of the topography of the land, whether there are mountains, whether there are valleys, whether it's desert, or whether it's well clothed with green grass and trees and so forth and so on. This all affects how we live. If you want to bring it back to our particular environment here, we see that this lifestyle of people who are on, for example, the east coast of the United States, where the land is flat, where there's a megalopolis from Boston, all the way down to Washington, D.C. and

beyond, that's a different lifestyle that's shaped at that point from people who live up in the mountains, for example, or live in the Midwest.

And there are cultures that are engaged with that. So, just to reiterate, geography does shape who we are and how we live and what goes on in our lives. If we want to draw this back to Bible geography and just extrapolate what I've just said, we get a greater appreciation for where God chose to put his people.

Because, of course, this land is not just any old land. And that's what we're going to be exploring. Where God chose to plant his people is extremely important in terms of it's becoming a testing ground of faith.

That's a term I'm going to use over and over again. You're going to see it on the screens. It's not my term.

It's actually one that was coined by the instructor that I mentioned a moment ago, Jim Monson. And it's been adopted around the geography world because it really is. Bible geography helps us understand God's testing ground of faith for his people.

Well, then, just to kind of flesh this out a little bit, when we start studying the history and putting the history, the development of these events, onto the playing board, into the spatial dimension, we know that there are lessons that we can learn from that. And so, just to reiterate what I've got, there is no religion that's divorced from the historical events that shape the cultures into which it is born. Paul will make a point of this when he teaches in 1 Corinthians 10.

He reminds us of all the things that happened to God's people and to Israel, how he brought them through the sea, how he provided water for them, and how he provided manna for them. He then talks about the things that they did, most of which were not exactly exemplary. But he says those things happened as types for us to learn lessons.

So history contains lessons for us. Therefore, we've got a good sense in terms of what we want to study as we're going through this particular unit. Now let's carry on a little bit and see what it is that we want to focus on.

In other words, as we work our way through all of these lectures, how do we put together the things that impact our study? Well, first of all, obviously, land because the study of the land is going to indeed be our primary focus for each unit that we're going to get into. In addition to that, we want to look at all the texts that will inform our understanding of this place. Most of those, of course, are going to be Bible texts, but there are others outside.

We'll talk about some examples of those momentarily. The third term on the lower left down here, toponymy, may not be one that's particularly familiar to you, but it means the study of place names. And I'll say a little bit more about that when we get to the end of this first hour.

And then we're going to devote a whole second session to archaeology, just an introduction to archaeology and how that helps us understand our wider discipline of historical geography. So, with no further ado, let's jump into what we can learn about the land, first of all. I'm going to spend quite a bit of time on this.

It'll provide our whole overarching appreciation for this land between or testing ground of faith that I mentioned a moment ago. Well, of course, the term land between has to make you ask, all right, between what? And that's going to be an important thing to focus on. This is a very rough map.

It's a sketch. It's a schematic. It's left out all those wonderful things that you saw on the first map, but it's going to help us a little bit to help unpack what we mean when we say the land between because there are a number of different factors that come into this.

Some of them are geographical. Others have to do with people and where they live and they're more geopolitical. So first of all, we want to think in terms of power circles.

That is a term that will help us a little bit. We have Anatolia, which is modern day Turkey if you want to think about this. We also have Mesopotamia, and those two are going to be the seat of fairly extensive cultures as the centuries go on.

And then, of course, we have Egypt down here as well. So, some power circles. Don't lose sight of the fact that in between is our, not a circle so much, but I have a bit of an ellipse there.

Aram, otherwise known as Syria, depending on what translation of the Bible you're reading, you'll notice that it is in between not just our circle of Anatolia, by the way, the peoples who live in Anatolia are not necessarily directly impacting God's people in the Old Testament period, but they're there and they're going to have some impact. And then, certainly, that area is going to be important as we move into New Testament times. But notice that if we have someone, let's just say Babylonians or Assyrians or Persians who happen to be ruling in this area, if they want to expand their boundaries, and take it from me, they always do, they're going to be pushing, well, they've got to follow the water sources.

We're going to say more about that in a moment. So they're going to travel up this way before they either go to Anatolia or before they go down into Egypt, which is

relatively much a breadbasket due to the Nile River. Who's in between? Well, it's going to be Aram here as a buffer zone.

And then, of course, we have who else is in between. And that is going to be the area that we'll come to call Israel, the land of Israel in this area. And traffic, for reasons that we'll make clear a little bit later on, is going to have to flow through this region because here you've got the Mediterranean Sea, basically a barrier.

Here, you have the Great Arabian Desert, another barrier. If you don't have water sources, you're not going to be traveling across it in antiquity, and probably not a whole lot now, either. So our major roads, if we were to go back to that previous map, you would see those red road lines are going to be going right through here.

This is a land bridge, and it's a land between power circles. That will be important. In that capacity, it becomes a podium.

It becomes a podium for all kinds of messages to go out to these various regions. What's really interesting about this, of course, is that God intended this when he said to Abraham, be a blessing, Genesis 12. That's going to have a lot to do with the message of God's covenant love.

Isaiah's going to make a point of that as well. Of course, were they faithful people in being a podium, or as we're going to see over and over again, did they absorb stuff from the cultures around them? But at any rate, kind of keep that in mind as we move through this as well. We have some other betweennesses that we need to talk about.

One is that it's a land between the West, all the cultural possibilities that were over here and still are, by the way, and the East. And I'm going to say a lot more about that in a moment. So, this is just an introductory tag right here.

It's also, speaking simply from a meteorological weather perspective, it's a land between the Mediterranean Sea and that desert I mentioned a moment ago, the Arabian Desert. I'll unpack that a lot more as well because that is really important in terms of how God uses this land to bless them or not. We'll say more about that.

It's also kind of bringing some closure to this complex between what question. It's going to be between competing religious and worldview systems. I said a moment ago that it was supposed to be a podium for a good message going out.

But unfortunately, God's people found themselves very often too impressed with the things around them, too impressed, for example, with Baal worship. And we'll have more to say about that, especially when we deal with the Elijah narratives when we deal with the temptations that the people always experienced to succumb to Baal

worship, worship of that God who supposedly controlled rain, thunder, storm, agricultural, and economic productivity, and so forth. So it's a land between all these competing worldview systems, and sadly, God's people did adopt a lot of idolatrous practices from roundabout.

So, with one little map, we've got a good sense of what it means to talk about the land between. That's the beginning. Let's see where we go from here.

Unpacking that West versus East thing just a little bit more. I've given you a list of the kinds of people that were considered coming from the West or Northwest in one form or another. And so we're going to see, I mentioned Baal worship a moment ago, we're going to see that Phoenicians who lived in that area around Tyre and Poseidon were the ones who really did wholesale have Baal worship as part of who they were.

They encroached on God's people. Well, the Philistines come from somewhere across the Mediterranean, but when they really impact God's people, they are indeed in the Western part of that little slice of country trying to encroach into the hill country where God's people were.

And then we see a further succession. We see Greeks coming, Alexander the Great. We see Romans on their coattails.

Later on, in the, well, a couple of centuries around the turn of the millennium, 1099 through 1187, we see the Crusaders sweeping through and doing all kinds of damage. We see Europeans coming in all kinds of ways and reasons. And then finally, even with Israelis, we have a little bit of competition with Israelis who are considered by the local populations to be coming from the West.

Here are some characteristics of these kinds of folks as they're perceived as coming into this very interesting land. I'll say more about how that works its way out in a contemporary situation in a moment. But these folks always seem to have, or at least purport to have, a cultural advantage, right? More cosmopolitan, presumably more progressive, more liberal, and threatening to the local populations.

If we want to look at it that way, here are some biblical examples. For example, if we read Judge's narrative on Samson, Samson is always compelled to head down to the Philistines. It's a more advanced culture.

He goes there repeatedly. He's after Philistine women, among other things, but he's drawn into that more progressive culture. And God's going to use that, interestingly enough, to bring judgment upon the Philistines.

We see as we move a little bit farther on into our historical record when we've got Philistine threats still. In this case, they have, as 1 Samuel 13 tells us, a real

technological advantage because they have the ability to produce iron. And it says in the text that the Israelites had to take their implements down to the Philistines to get them sharpened.

Philistines knew how to do that. So it's a Western, presumably, advantage over the people who were just living there. And they, we might think of them as our eastern desert folk.

Perhaps they're semi-nomadic in some cases. They are nomadic. They're herders.

They tend to be more provincial conservative and keep the ways of the fathers. And we see this clash. We actually see it today, but we see it as well as we work our way through biblical history.

Even now, when you look at modern-day Jerusalem, it's talked in terms of West Jerusalem and East Jerusalem. And there's all kinds of geopolitical implications going on, even with those terms, for those of you who follow that kind of thing. Well, that's our land between sociocultural issues.

You see, that creates a very interesting context. Let's talk about land between in terms of weather issues, because this too is extremely important. Here's a map.

I have borrowed it from Carl Rasmussen's NIV Atlas to the Bible. And just notice what we've got here. We've got our Dead Sea.

We've got the Sea of Galilee. This is going to be the Rift Valley. We're going to become really familiar with that as time goes on.

Out here, as we notice, the Mediterranean Sea and the desert off to the East. Right in between, right in between, a mountain range that pretty much runs the whole length and a little bit beyond, up in this direction, north. A mountain range that runs primarily north, slightly northeast, and then down to the south.

That's between the sea and the desert. That is tremendously significant because when you have moist air over the sea, which you do, those of you who live near a coastal area are well aware that humidity is an issue. So, our prevailing winds, generally speaking, are coming from the west.

They're bringing these moist clouds, the clouds that have been gathering over the Mediterranean Sea. They come across that mountain range. And now, track with me as we look at what happens because I realize this is a simplified version, but I think it'll help us understand the importance of these three components.

Sea, mountains, desert. Moist air rises. It's being pushed over, rises over the mountain range, and cools.

And therefore, as it does so, there's going to be some form of precipitation on those western slopes of the mountains. In the rainy season, there are two seasons. One is winter, and that's the rainy season generally running from about October-ish through March-ish, and then summer is dry.

During the summer, we're going to have that moisture. At nighttime, because it's cooling down, that'll be in the form of dew. So you've got that consistent provision when things are normal, such as some form of moisture coming and depositing itself on the western slopes.

Notice that the higher the elevation, the more rainfall you get. And therefore, even though we have a substantial amount of rain in the Jerusalem area, maybe 22 to 25 inches of rain per year, once you get up to Mount Carmel, it's higher once you get up to Mount Hermon, higher.

So you're going to have more rain in those contexts as well. Rainfall decreases from north to south. So obviously, down here, we're going to have significantly less, 8 to 12 inches of rain in this area or less.

Rain decreases from West to East. In other words, once those clouds have deposited their rainfall on the western slopes, we're going to see a rain shadow right here. Interestingly enough, as I said a moment ago, you've got approximately 22 inches of rain per year in Jerusalem.

That's right here again. By the way, if you need to find Jerusalem on a map, you always can. Go to the north end of the Dead Sea and then just head straight west.

It's about 12 miles, and it'll be right there. And it's right on that ridge of this mountain slope. To the East of that, the east side of the mountain range, we've got a rain shadow.

By the time you get down to Jericho, a mere 12 miles or so east of Jerusalem, the rain is probably 2 to 4 inches of rain per year. So you see, that rain shadow is really quite dramatic. Well, let's continue on and expand this rainfall and Fertile Crescent area just a little bit more or idea just a little bit more.

I said when I looked at that introductory map, and we were talking about Syria as a buffer zone, I suggested that for people to travel from the Fertile Crescent area, whether it happened to be Babylonia or any other particular group here, they would follow the rivers just to keep the water sources there. So, our Fertile Crescent is

primarily defined by the Tigris River. We're going to just mention these in a moment in case you're taking some notes on them.

Tigris goes all the way up in there and then the Euphrates River, which is going to track along this way. Then, as you make your way up through here, when we get into our historical units, we're going to talk a lot more about Padan Aram and so forth. You're going to come along the Mediterranean coast, so we have a slice, a thinner slice, of the south and southwestern side of the Fertile Crescent right along the Mediterranean coast.

I'm going to say how that works in a moment, and then it'll just inch down off our map here and affect Egypt as well because the Nile River is there. But if you notice in this darker tan area, that's our area that's getting about two to four inches of rain per year, and there's a very thin part of it that sneaks right up into what we called the rain shadow a moment ago. Well, just a little bit of an excursus.

I mentioned water sources of Tigris and Euphrates, and I want to just say some of our water sources as they impact this big area. Obviously, the Nile is in Egypt, and when we do a small unit on the Nile in about four lectures or so, we're going to talk about how significant that is in terms of defining all of Egypt's culture. The Nile will provide that.

The Fertile Crescent we mentioned a moment ago, and these two rivers are, of course, extremely important in terms of providing consistent water sources for that area. It's a muddy culture. The Nile not so much, but the Tigris and Euphrates rivers as they flow through Mesopotamia is muddy.

Mesopotamia does mean between the rivers; that's the name itself, and it makes perfect sense, although there is some geographical debate on exactly which rivers that is, but for now, we're going to leave them as the Tigris and Euphrates. Our southwestern edge is shaped by the land location, as I've just described it to you. It's between the sea and the desert.

That is the thing with those rain clouds coming in from the sea. When the Lord says through Moses, this is a land that drinks rain from the heavens, that's exactly what it is. And that, of course, as you are guessing and hearing that and reading it later on, you're going to see how that works in terms of God's blessing or when he needs to enforce covenant sanctions against the people withholding that rainfall.

So here we see just some references. I'm actually going to read some of these passages. Deuteronomy 11 is extremely important.

We will be coming back to it from time to time. So let me take a moment, and as I read, I'll stop periodically and maybe expand on some of these things. Deuteronomy

11 starts with the Lord's command to love, love the Lord your God, and keep his requirements.

Now, I'm skipping down to verse 10. The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt from which you've come, where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot as a vegetable garden. There is some discussion in terms of what irrigated by foot might mean.

We do have some examples of water wheels, and you would turn them sometimes using your foot, and there'd be little buckets on this wheel that would pick up water and transfer it where you needed it. More likely is the fact that in Egypt, alongside the Nile River proper, you have a floodplain. And once that floodplain is flooded, they would very easily make little irrigation channels throughout all these areas of the floodplain.

Depending on where you wanted the water to go, you'd actually use your foot to tap open a place, dig open a little place for water to run, and then close off other channels as well. So that's one way of thinking about that or another way. At any rate, this land is not like that.

Verse 11. The land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains. We saw that already.

And valleys that drinks rain from heaven. It is a land the Lord your God cares for the eye of the Lord your God continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end. And now notice this isn't just a statement about weather patterns.

There are some contingencies here. Verse 13. So if you faithfully obey the commands I'm giving you today to love the Lord your God and serve him with all your heart and all your soul, of course, that's going right back to here, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one you shall love the Lord your God.

At any rate, serve him that way. Then I will send rain on your land in its season. And then there's an added bonus.

Both the autumn and the spring rains. In other words, I said a moment ago that our rainy season, called winter there, is generally from October to March, give or take. The early rains, well, they're a little bit before that.

They're going to moisten up the ground and soften it up for planting. That's a blessing. The spring rains, a little added boost after the rainy season itself is over.

And that does give just enough to keep those crops moving forward. So autumn rains and spring rains are special blessings, sometimes called the early rains and the latter

rains, depending on which translation you're reading. At any rate, the Lord promises to do that.

And then there's a place where you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. We're going to talk a lot more about those in a moment. Verse 15, I'll provide grass in the fields for your cattle.

You will eat and be satisfied. Verse 16, be careful, or you'll be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. Remember, we talked about the land between competing cultural worldviews.

That's the issue, and it's coming to the fore right here. Verse 17, then the Lord's anger will burn against you, and he will shut the heavens so it will not rain, and the ground will yield no produce, and you will perish from the good land the Lord your God is giving you. So, there are some sobering consequences.

And if you haven't done it already in your Bible reading, look at the times that famine strikes the land, both Old Testament and New Testament. So early and later rains and rain in general and the productivity of the land. We'll come back to some of that other productivity in a moment.

We also see references to do. Wonderful poem in Deuteronomy 33. We see Haggai, we see Psalm 133, a wonderful passage.

How good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters dwell together in unity. It's like oil poured on the beard, and we could talk about that, but the verse I'm aiming for is the dew of Mount Hermon on Mount Zion. That's an incredibly refreshing thing.

Mount Hermon is much farther north, as we're going to see later on, and the dew there would be heavier. Bring that down to Mount Zion, where God's house was planted. That would be a tremendous blessing.

We also see references to withering. In other words, dial back to the famine stuff that I mentioned a moment ago. Mount Carmel, when we looked at our map, I waved my pointer at it for just a moment there.

Mount Carmel juts right out into the Mediterranean Sea. It is high. It is farther west.

It is a place that does have a significant amount of rainfall. When it withers, God's judgment is on the people. And both Amos 1.2 and Nahum 1.4 talk about the top of Carmel's withering judgment.

When we deal with the Elijah narrative, which we will do, Lord willing, we're going to see the top of Carmel withered, and yet that's the place where Elijah will have the

contest between himself as a prophet of the Lord God of Israel and the prophet Baal. At any rate, references to that and then references to, well, it's called a hamsin or a shorav now, although it's not called that in the biblical text. It is a scorchingly hot wind from the desert.

It's when those prevailing winds from the west don't happen for a while. Instead, that wind direction shifts around, and you can certainly see why coming off a very dry desert, which in the summertime can get to about 130 degrees Fahrenheit, is going to be horrible. Jeremiah 4 verses 11 and 12 will talk about that scorching wind of the desert withering everything.

I have a couple of pictures here as examples. This first one, you may think, oh, that's just looking at a nice little cloud. Well, actually, it is looking at a cloud, but it's a cloud of dust in the air.

This fierce desert wind, because there's nothing there that keeps that very fine dust on the ground when it comes, is kicking up all kinds of dust into the air. And so here we are at noontime, looking directly at the sun. We're actually down the negative portion of the land and taking a picture because that's how much dirt is in the air.

This can go on for days sometimes. It's often showing up, usually, not always, but usually in the time around the transition between winter and spring. So, there is a seasonal kind of uncertainty and instability in May.

We do get these calm scenes. Sometimes it will rain afterward, and when it does, it kind of rains mud on what's there. Let me give you another illustration.

This was, as you can see, taken relatively recently. It's Jerusalem. It's looking across the Hinnom Valley, which you can kind of see down here, but all that stuff is dust in the air.

Here is what the place usually looks like. Clear out the dust, and here we are, seeing the iconic Church of Scotland, big and center, Hinnom Valley, down below. So that gives you two illustrations of what the calm scene indeed would look like and the difficulties it would create for all kinds of reasons, not least of which is just plain breathing.

Jesus himself will talk about some of these weather patterns, and I've quoted a little bit of this just to show that he expected his crowd to know how the weather functioned. And by the way, that makes a good deal of sense because, obviously, this is an audience for Jesus that is dealing with agricultural existence. At any rate, Jesus said to the crowd, when you see a cloud rising in the West, you say it's going to rain.

And so he's recognizing that those consistent patterns of bringing moisture-laden clouds from the West are going to produce the very needed rainfall. And when the South wind blows, that's the calm scene. You say it's going to be hot, and it is.

And then, of course, he draws a lesson from it, doesn't he? Hypocrites, you know how to interpret the appearance of the earth in the sky. And they did, by the way, they were good at that. But then he goes on to say, how is it you don't know how to interpret this present time? And there are all kinds of implications related to that.

Well, I mentioned the term testing ground of faith a moment ago. Keep these two terms in mind because they're going to shape our understanding of land as we continue to move on. It's the land between all those betweennesses we've mentioned, and because that's true, it becomes a testing ground of faith.

God's covenant promises build on this. When he articulates the covenant to them at Sinai, he is going to say that there are going to be consequences. The consequences, if they're obedient to the Torah, agricultural blessings, security, he promises those things.

But in both of these passages, disobedience means famine, death, and destruction at the hands of enemies, not happy consequences. Deuteronomy chapter eight says this is a good land. Indeed, it's geopolitically the land between.

That can be good if the people are obedient, and we certainly see that when we have some good kings who are dealing well and wisely with the folks around them. It's a good land in terms of weather patterns because the rainfall is sufficient to make it very productive, as we're going to see in a moment when we start talking about geology. Yes, geology is really interesting, and it's important to know.

This is a land that by and large, in the main portion of it where God's tribes were planted, has very fertile soils. And so add together rainfall with fertile soils, and you will have a land that God has blessed. We also have a land in terms of being geopolitically the land between where there could be a podium.

It's fascinating, and I'm jumping way ahead at this point to a little vignette from the New Testament. It's fascinating that Herod the Great, it's a name that you all know, Herod the Great, when he built a place called Caesarea on the sea, intended to use that to bring it as an entrepôt point for what he considered to be high-class, cosmopolitan, very much better Roman, Greco-Roman culture into this land that he thought was a bit of a backwater. He'd been appointed king.

But in God's providence, the Holy Spirit turned that around 180 degrees, and it's going to be from Caesarea that we will indeed have this podium effect because the gospel will go forth from that point. Well, let's keep going and understand a little bit

about these matters of the produce of the land that I mentioned earlier when I read, particularly Deuteronomy 11.14. Grain, new wine, and oil. Think of this as the triad of crops.

Do they grow other things? Yes, they do. But this is the triad that shows up over and over again, both in our covenant promises, Deuteronomy 11, but also as the prophets are talking. Because, as you probably know, you've been in this class for very long, the prophets are called covenant enforcement mediators, and therefore, when the people were obedient or not, they went back to the covenant stipulations and referred to them.

So Joel is going to, among many other prophets, talk about grain, new wine, and oil. Order in which they're harvested. Let's look at them just a little bit.

You see grain fields. By the way, this little bit of water up here is the corner of the Sea of Galilee, and you see some lovely grain fields ready to be harvested. Bread is a translation of the term lehem.

We recognize that in lehem, house of bread. But it's synonymous with food, and so some of your translations, when you see food, I think the NIV does this quite consistently; when you see the term food, it's really translating that term lehem, bread because an awful lot of caloric intake depended on that. Grapevines.

Grain, new wine, and oil. And so you can see and read as well as I can wine was important for them. Water purifier, other things.

This is the way grapevines used to be grown in the land. They were right down on the ground. Now, when you go to visit Israel, just about every grape-growing location has trellises because they have irrigation.

Here, however, these vines were, the stem, or sorry, the vine branch itself, the vine itself, would have been on a rock underneath, holding it up just a little bit, and all of those aspects, both the leaves, the vine, and the rock underneath would collect dew, and that would run down into the ground. Here is a very small wine press. It may be hard to see it.

It's actually carved into the bedrock right in the middle of a grape arbor. Arbor isn't the right word, but at any rate, there it is. You can see the outline of it right here.

It's small. You put the grapes in there, trample on them, and then have the wine collect in that little vat. Whoops, I skipped one here.

Let's back up just a tad. Whoops, we're not getting it back up. Okay, hang on with me.

That last one was simply an olive tree, so we'll just keep going. To additional agricultural blessings, in addition to the grain, new wine, and oil, we have what I mentioned a moment ago, wonderful soils. We also have springs, and that, too, is going to be dependent on geology.

We're going to come back to that. This is an area of semi-nomadic existence, especially on the margins and fringes of it, so there are lots and lots of flocks, sheep, and goats together as you watch them. As you notice, these provide a lot of sustenance, both in terms of how they live and what they eat, goat's milk especially, and they have to be together.

Notice there's a little notice here. Sheep overgraze the same area. They tend to stay there.

Goats move them, and they move the whole flock forward. Just an aside for those of you who like little bits of references, Tim Laniac, associated with Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, has written a lovely little book based on the time when he and his wife lived with Bedouin. Well, by my sheep, or no.

Well, shepherds watched their flocks. I'm sorry. I get those two Christmas carol titles mixed up.

At any rate, he gives lessons on these kinds of things that we can learn from living with the Bedouin and then applies them to pastors as they are shepherds of flocks as well. At any rate, moving along, we have other indications in the biblical text that there are also herds, and we also have indications of trees and rich pasture. So even though you look sometimes at pictures of the land, people would have come back, and it seems to be very dry and barren, in the rainy season, it's not.

And I would also suggest that 200 years ago, 300 years ago, 400 years ago, 2,000 years ago, it was different in terms of trees as well. Sadly, during the Ottoman Empire, 400 years of Turkish mandate, lots and lots of trees were cut down. There are all kinds of interesting geopolitical reasons for that.

Right from the get-go, when the Lord is talking to Moses at Mount Horeb, he says, this is going to be a land flowing with milk and honey. And you see that phrase coming back over and over again. The milk is no doubt goat's milk, all those wonderful flocks.

The honey could be one of two things. It seems that before these people, God's people came into the land and got their tribal inheritances, most of the large cities were in areas that were closer to the coastal plain. We're going to talk about those areas a little bit later on.

And this area that was actually hill country proper was much less populated, and so were wildflowers. We see in our Samson narrative that we mentioned Samson a moment ago. You've got bees mentioned, hives, honey, and so forth. And so you've got that kind of thing.

Having said that, there are those who also think that in those upper hill country areas, you didn't have grapes; sorry, you did have, let me try that all over again, you did not have date palms. Some folks think that date palms might have provided a sweet honey mash for them in the lower areas. Well, here's an interesting passage.

Not all of us think necessarily of looking at a list of king's overseers as a place to study geography. But let me just summarize First Chronicles 25 through 31. I'm not going to read the whole thing, but it's talking about people who are in control of the royal estates.

And here's what they controlled. They farmed the land in charge of vineyards, in charge of sycamore-fig trees in the western foothills, olive trees, olive oil, herds grazing in Sharon, we're going to talk about that, herds in the valleys, camels, donkeys, flocks. And so, in that little passage, we have an indication of both regions. We're going to be doing regional studies a little bit later on, as well as the produce of the land.

Well, that's enough of an overview on the land right now. Let's do a quick transition to thinking about texts. Just a reminder, that four-fold set of sub-disciplines that contribute to historical geography, land, and text was second, toponymy third, and archaeology fourth.

A couple of notes on texts. And this clearly is a focus. Those are going to focus on texts that contribute to our understanding of history in its geographical context. So, obviously, we're not looking at everything.

We're going to look at biblical references. And just a few that will help us understand there are different kinds of geographical references, even in the biblical text. I'll unpack those in a moment, so I won't read through them now.

We're also going to spend some time looking at extra-biblical texts. Most of them come from Egypt. Obviously, that's because Egypt is a dry place, and we preserve more texts there than in some of these other places.

Plus, the Egyptian pharaohs had a way of making their way through the land between very often and preserving records of their forays into that area. So, here are just a couple of summaries of the kinds of texts we have. Descriptions are composed primarily to maintain some sense of records from antiquity.

Genesis 10 is one of them. We'll come back to that in a moment. Then we have another kind of text, boundary descriptions.

Do you remember what I read to you right from the get-go in Joshua 15? Well, all the way from 15 through 18, we have names of boundaries or at least town lists. And these seem to have been used for administrative purposes. And we also, interestingly enough, this is in small form in the biblical text.

We certainly have it in much larger form from our Egyptian context in the pharaohs who talked about their expeditions. But 1 Kings 15 and 2 Kings 15, this is really handy because they're both Chapter 15. But they're going to talk about conquests, or maybe I should say invasions, into the land by two foreign rulers.

Talk about those more momentarily. Here's Genesis 10, just a little excerpt to give us a sense of what this whole record from antiquity might be all about. Sons of Japheth, coastland peoples.

And then it mentions Cush, Egypt put, mentions Canaan. And then, if you skip down to the last sentence, the territory of the Canaanites, and now notice how specific this is getting, extended from Sidon, which happens to be up in the area of Phoenicia, in the direction of Garar as far as Gaza, going straight down the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. And then in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Adma, and Zeboiim.

Of course, that's a really interesting reference because we don't know exactly where those cities were. They were the ones destroyed in Genesis 19. The next illustration is still of a biblical text.

Boundary descriptions, Tao lists. I mentioned this already, so let me simply note that we have the preeminence of Judah, as I mentioned a moment ago. All of Chapter 15, all 63 verses of it.

Then, you can notice that in contrast to the much less profiled Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan in Chapter 19, Here are the expeditions I mentioned a moment ago. When we start talking about these particular areas where these happened, we're going to come back and revisit these.

So, I won't go into the geopolitical circumstances underlying each of these invasions right now. What I want you to see is the mention of names. You've got a Syrian king.

His name is Ben-Hadad. He's been summoned by the king of Judah. And what does he do? He sends an army into what is then the northern kingdom.

That's Israel. The next list of names may not mean a lot to you yet. It will eventually, because Eon, Dan, Abba Beit Ma'akha, all Kinneret, all land of Naphtali, means that this area has been picked off one by one.

There's a city, another city, another city, and the whole region is being gobbled up by the geopolitical entity of Syria under Ben-Hadad at that point. It's in a line of travel. The same kind of line of travel comes in from the northern part of the country; notice the names again.

Eon, Abba Beit Ma'akha, and now it gets even worse. These are names that are more significant, and all end up with all the land of Naphtali. The land of Naphtali was the tribal inheritance, which is just to the north and the west of the Sea of Galilee.

So this guy named Tiglath-Pileser, who's king of Assyria and Mesopotamia, is really pretty much subjecting that whole region to his rule and dominion. Well, let's pick up some extra-biblical texts, and this is going to, of course, overlap with our study of archaeology. We have the same kind of stuff coming out of Egypt expedition journals.

Where have we seen that before? We also have just one example of a literary papyrus, a guy named Sinui, which is very interesting. It describes his journey into the area of Canaan. We have execration texts, which are strange words, but for those of you who want to go looking at your Google dictionary, these are texts that pronounce curses.

They pronounce curses on the enemies of the particular person making up the document, and I'm using a document in quotation marks. You're going to see in a moment pictures of them. And then probably one that might be a little more familiar, there's a place called El Amarna where a whole series of letters have been found.

I'll say much more about that as well when we talk about the individual cities in the land of Canaan that were sending these letters to a pharaoh in Egypt who, in their minds, was not doing what he should be doing in overseeing that land for their well-being. Well, here's just one illustration of an expedition list. Thutmose III, probably the most significant Egyptian conqueror, if you will, was a military person.

We have a number of records of things that he did, some of them taking place in Canaan. He's in the 1400s BC, 15th century, and each one of these little oval shapes that have a head on the top of it, and it's a cartouche, and it's got the name of a place that he has conquered, and it works its way up. Notice there's a fair number of people who have come under his dominion.

Over on this panel, there's a large picture of him wielding his war apparatus. Execration texts, two different sets of them. One of them, one set of them, put these names, curses on bulls.

They'd mention the name of a person. Then, of course, if you broke this bull, it was symbolic, kind of a magical thing of breaking the power of that particular enemy. These come from, as you can see, the middle of the 19th century BC, and Jerusalem is mentioned in this particular one.

Another style was to make little terracotta figurines. You'll see these are a little bit later in form, but you actually had a head. That head kind of resembles the heads that you saw on Thutmose's list to a degree, but you'd have, again, a curse pronounced, and all of these are helpful because they are listing places.

That's why they're helpful. We're studying geography at this point. The archives that were found at Amarna are one example of many.

A-N-E-T stands for Ancient Near Eastern Texts, a very classic volume that collects many, many of these things. Those are the page numbers there, but this particular one in cuneiform mentions the place, Hebron or Hebron. All those are tremendously helpful for us.

Just a couple more extra biblical texts, and I note these not because they are specifically geographical. You can read that gold sentence as well as I can, but they actually corroborate biblical events in those geographical contexts in which those events took place. From Assyria, we have Shalmaneser III, who is going to make a stele, a standing stone, basically, that talks about how he conquered Jehu and made him pay tribute.

There's actually a depiction of Jehu bowing down before Shalmaneser. Those of you who go to the British Museum can actually see it there. From Transjordan, we have something called the Mesha stele, which is from King Mesha.

Interestingly enough, that name gets mentioned in the record in Kings, so that's a corroboration. Then, I'm going to say much more about the Tel Dan inscription later on. Dan, well, if you remember that list, that expedition list, that invasion list, Dan was one of those taken, so that's a city in the northern part.

As it turns out, this particular inscription is from somebody who happened to be ruling in Syria or Aram, and he is bragging about the fact that he has wiped out, well, a northern king, and here's the important thing, House of David. To that we will return as well. Just a picture of the Mesha stele.

This has an interesting history. It was found in the 1800s. Sadly, the people who lived where it was found were pretty suspicious of the people coming to find it, and so they broke it.

We do have kind of a plaster cast of it. It's in the museum in Amman, Jordan. You can see that.

Here is a picture of the Tel Dan inscription, and again, mentions the killing of, and those things in brackets, by the way, are where we've got a break, but when you put together the last part of a name, Ram, son of the king of Israel, you can kind of get the idea it's probably Jehoram, and then if you have the son of the king of the House of David, that's probably Ahaziah. Now, of course, this is an interesting reference because you have the Syrian king or the Aramean king saying that he knocked off these two guys as we read the biblical text in 2 Kings 9 and 10. It's Jehu who's done them in.

Just a couple of additional sources in the land. What is an ostrakon? Good question. It is a small piece of pottery.

Pottery is ubiquitous. Broken pottery is even more ubiquitous there, but it turns out to be very good for writing little notes on, and so you have potsherds, broken pieces of pottery, that are sometimes found with inscriptions on them. I tend to call them the post-it notes of antiquity, if that helps you a little bit because it's something small just to make a note from the place called Samaria.

We'll see where that is later. Some ostraca looks like this. There are, well, more pottery jar handles.

The jar is used to convey all kinds of things, oil, wheat, etc., and sometimes these jar handles would have royal seal impressions or just seal impressions on them. We have from a place called Lachish, which we're going to revisit a lot later on, more ostraca talking about the difficult times of people who were there, and then Arad, same kind of thing, ostraca from people who were in defending that location in the Negev. Again, we'll talk about locations later on.

The famous Siloam inscription is found in something we call Hezekiah's Tunnel. We're going to be dealing with Hezekiah's Tunnel when we talk about the geography of Jerusalem, but this describes how that was made, and of course, it's a very impressive kind of thing. Here's a little bit of a close-up of that ostrakon, and just for you to see that the Hebrew alphabet, for those of you studying Hebrew, you know this one.

This is Paleo-Hebrew, and this is how it matches up with the alphabet that we know. That's kind of interesting because that's the divine name right there on that

ostrakon. Well, we've made our way through the land, an overview of texts, an overview of the kinds of texts, and now just a very quick look at toponymy or the study of place names.

This is a photograph, not it's a photograph, it's a sketch depiction of one of the most famous historical geographers from the 1800s, Edward Robinson. Three-volume work describing his journeys through this land. It was a fascinating reading, but he was among the intrepid folks who, in the 1800s and mid-1800s, pioneered this business of the study of place names, matching them up with biblical text.

Now, how does it work? Well, the biblical text written in Hebrew, which we just looked at a moment ago, has a language continuity because, as he was there in the 1800s, Arabic was being spoken. They're the same language family. There are names that are very much the same, going from Hebrew to Arabic.

Later on, we'll deal with some examples of that. For there to be continuity that is reflected in that language continuity, you have to have continuity of water source because, in that place, you don't just park your establishment wherever you want to be. You have to live near a water source, whether it's a spring or a well that can be dug.

Likewise, as these cities continued through the centuries, they had to be reasonably defensible. And so, as Robinson and others were looking around for these, they looked for villages that indeed were near springs, especially in the hill country area. We'll see again why that is true.

They looked for cities that had some kind of defensible location, probably valleys around them or some such thing. They also looked for things that would fit with the geography described in texts. We'll see some ways that work as we move forward with our particular regional studies.

And then finally, as much as they could, and this is happening even more now in the last century or so, see what kind of data there are in archaeological surveys that help corroborate these things. There are lots of principles in terms of dealing with language issues, which we will not get into at this point. So, those are three archaeology topics we will discuss in the next lecture.

This brings to a close the first lecture, Introduction to the General Discipline of Historical Geography with the Promise of Archaeology to Come.

This is Dr. Elaine Phillips in her teaching on Introduction to Biblical Studies. This is session 1, Introduction to Historical Geography.